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# More Than 1001 Days and Nights of Hong Kong Internment

A Personal Narrative

Chaloner Grenville Alabaster

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Courtesy of Margaret St Maur Sheil.

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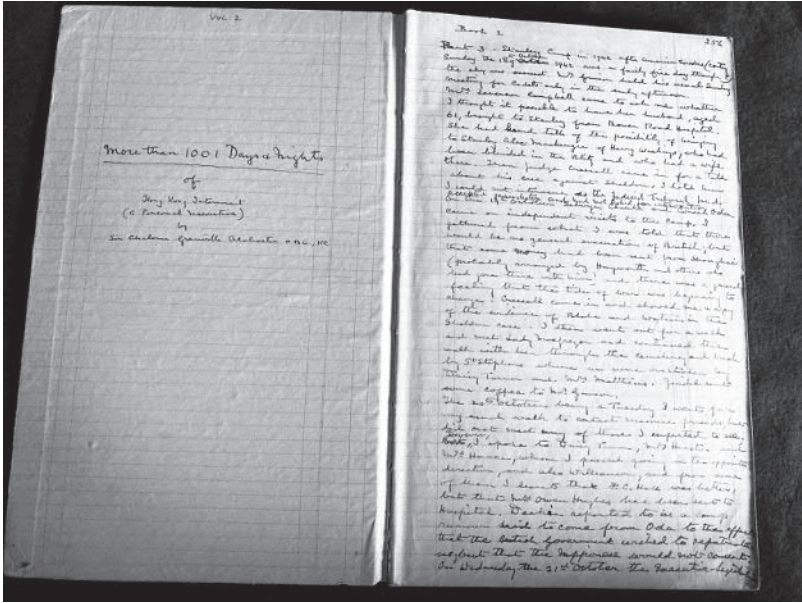
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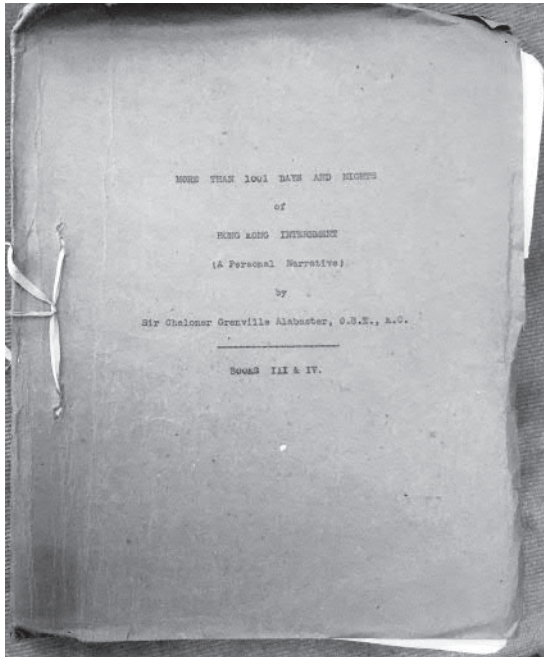
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Sir Grenville Alabaster in his uniform as Attorney General, Hong Kong



Pages from Book II of Grenville Alabaster's Journal, written after the war and based on his diaries



Cover of Books III and IV, of the typed version of Grenville Alabaster's Journal, used as the source text for this publication

BOOK III.PART 1.STANLEY CAMP IN 1943. January to June.

During the night of the 31st December 1942 six shots were heard from somewhere in the gaol. Whether it was an execution taking place or just some intoxicated Japanese sentry trying to be funny we could not tell. The room above us had just been vacated as a result of the last Exodus to Shanghai, and some enthusiastic Scots seeing the New Year in used it for a dance and first-footing revelry, but they stopped the noise after midnight.

At 10 a.m. on New Year's Day 1943 I went to a coffee party at Mrs. Hance's quarters in Block 5 and there met the Danbys, Mrs. Scott Harston, the Upsdells, Miss Anderson the school teacher, the Ormiston's of Reiss Massey & Co, Mrs. Brooks the solicitor's wife and several others.

As most people were going to use food from their own Red Cross or other parcels, the kitchen staffs decided to cook only one meal that day, and this was issued at 1.20 p.m. In the afternoon Pryde of the P. W. D. got up an England v Ireland football match to which Mr. Gimson and I were invited, being given reserved seats with the Football Committee. I called on the Owen Hughes to wish them a happy New Year.



# Introduction

Grenville Alabaster (1880–1958) was one of the most senior civil servants of the Hong Kong government to have left a first-hand account of his experience during the Battle of Hong Kong (8–25 December 1941) and the subsequent Japanese occupation (25 December 1941–30 August 1945).<sup>1</sup> Grenville, as Attorney General, and third in terms of seniority in the executive government under the Governor and the Colonial Secretary, was a long-term Hong Kong resident and successful lawyer in the private sector, who had also been born in China to a family with long-established China coast roots. He served as Attorney General, on and off, from as early as 1911, and had been an ex officio member and unofficial member of the Legislative Council and Executive Council. He knew his way around, knew people from all backgrounds, and was familiar with Hong Kong business, governance and affairs. He therefore became an invaluable counsellor and local guide to Franklin Gimson, who became the senior effective representative of the British government after the almost immediate removal of the governor by the Japanese following the surrender. This wartime journal reflects Grenville’s insightful observations and analysis based on his familiarity and experience with Hong Kong.

His journal (hereafter the “Alabaster Journal” or the “Journal”) is one of the most interesting memoirs about wartime Hong Kong unearthed in the early twenty-first century, during which time there has been a surge of similar works in English. The Governor, Sir Mark Young, did not write a memoir and said almost nothing about his internment, and the Colonial Secretary, Franklin Gimson, left an unpublished memoir. The Alabaster Journal thus offers a rare glimpse of the experience and thoughts of a top colonial civil servant during the fall of Hong Kong and the subsequent internment. The true value of Grenville’s memoir lies not only in his description of life in internment but also in his views on a variety of issues and events, such as the Battle of Hong Kong and the problems facing British rule before the war. The

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1. Gimson, who assumed office shortly before the war, kept a diary and wrote a recollection of the events in Stanley Camp, especially during the liberation. The manuscripts are held by Oxford University.

interaction between him and the rest of the internees, especially those from a different social/class background, is also of historical interest.

On reading Alabaster's words, one is also quickly struck by his clear and concise mind. He could be stiff and bureaucratic, but also displays empathy and an ability to relate, in a non-affected way, with people from different social classes, nationalities and diverse backgrounds. With a distinct gift for remembering people, he takes particular trouble to note down the names of a great number of those he met, or had dealings with, as if he was aware that in later years it might be important to friends and family to come across some record or news of their loved ones. He feels sadness at the looting of his family home and loss of his treasured collection of Chinese antiques. He misses his family, whom he dutifully sent away to Australia prior to the outbreak of hostilities, and longs for news of them — any communication, including snippets of news included in the letters received by other detainees, is carefully recorded, along with his feelings. Yet he accepts all these and other situations that arise throughout the period of hostilities and imprisonment and does everything he can to help his immediate senior, the Colonial Secretary, and others deal with the challenges of internment.

This introduction first addresses a number of editorial issues and explains the editors' decisions concerning the manuscript. To help the reader understand the context, the editors also include three short summaries on the fall of Hong Kong in December 1941, the Japanese rule from December 1941 to August 1945, and the background of Alabaster and his family. As these cannot cover all aspects of Hong Kong during the war, a short bibliography of related studies of the period is also included.

The Alabaster Journal was based on Grenville's daily diary, written throughout the war in four small notebooks. A few years after the war Alabaster wrote the fuller Journal in his shaky handwriting based on the diary entries, in two larger red-bound notebooks.<sup>2</sup> This was then typed up, most likely by his daughter Rosalie, who was a trained typist. It was divided into five "books"; the first, titled "The Japanese Invasion", deals with the period between the outbreak of the war on 8 December 1941 to 12 March 1942, when Alabaster was transferred to the internment camp at Stanley. Book II, "Stanley Internment Camp, 1942", starts with a critical review of the British rule in Hong Kong and the reasons for its collapse in December 1941, and then continues with a description of Alabaster's experience in Stanley Internment Camp, especially the struggle between the government officials, led by Franklin Gimson, and the Communal Council, which Alabaster disparagingly called "the local Soviet". The subsequent "books" offer a detailed itinerary of Alabaster's life in Stanley

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2. In private family archives. The original prison diaries were transcribed after the war into the red-backed journals, which were at some point typed up into the volumes from which this publication is taken.

Camp from 1943 to 1945, containing minute details about the weather, food, clothing, entertainment and interactions between the internees. The total length of the Journal was around 150,000 words. Of the many routine activities, a number of things stand out. One was Grenville's close communications with Colonial Secretary Franklin Gimson and the colonial officials throughout the internment. Another concerned his responsibility of dealing with the Japanese officials running the internment camp. In addition, Alabaster remained an active Mason, as he was the District Grand Master of English Freemasonry for Hong Kong and South China before the war. Towards the end of the internment Alabaster's description of his life in the camp became more concise, probably due to declining health, boredom, and a lack of writing tools and paper. Still, Alabaster tried to include as much detail about his life in camp as possible until the final days of the war. In summary, the Journal is written in a clear, concise and readable style, but it also reflects the interesting and complex character and background of the man who wrote it.

The editorial team worked on the typed version of the Journal, which was found by David St Maur Sheil, one of the editors of this volume, along with all the earlier versions including the original diaries, in his family attic.<sup>3</sup> Although the year that Alabaster completed this version is unknown, it is clear that it was done a few years after the war, as sometimes Alabaster inserts footnotes on the post-war status of certain people mentioned in the manuscript. For example, he noted that Lo Man Kam was knighted after the war, which happened in 1948. Alabaster, as one of the top civilian officials in pre-war Hong Kong who came from a family that was active on the China coast for almost a century, was well connected. He also had an excellent memory that allowed him to record the many people he had met and interacted with during the fall of Hong Kong and his subsequent internment. Although the titles of the people he mentioned are usually included in the Journal, the editorial team have also prepared short biographies of those that appear repeatedly, including the major colonial officials and the Japanese officials and officers.

It was a challenge for the editorial team to decide what to keep in the published manuscript as it was important to maintain the readability of the Journal while retaining many details of the wide variety of aspects of life in the camp and Hong Kong during the 1940s that readers may find interesting. Thus, the editorial team decided to adopt a minimalist approach to the removal of content, at the risk of including points that the reader may find trivial and repetitive. However, records of Alabaster's recurrent activities in camp, such as Masonic meetings, social gatherings, entertainment, lectures and lessons, and celebrations and funerals have all been retained, so that readers can have a better picture of his social life in the camp and interactions

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3. David St. Maur Sheil is the great-grandson of Grenville Alabaster.

between colonial elites during internment. The editorial team also decided to make only minimal changes in punctuation, in order to preserve as much of the original text as possible.

## The Japanese Invasion of Hong Kong

By the middle of 1940, as Hong Kong fast approached its centenary under British rule, there was little doubt that a Japanese attack was coming. In June, His Britannic Majesty's Ambassador in Tokyo had been informed that the British military attaché had been sent for by a Japanese military representative and had been told that unless Britain took immediate action to comply with certain Japanese demands, for example the closing of the borders of Hong Kong and Burma with China, and the withdrawal of British troops from Shanghai, Japan would declare war. This threat — and specifically the threat to Hong Kong itself — was considered serious enough to precipitate the mandatory evacuation of British women and children from Hong Kong to Australia.

Then, surprisingly, there was a pause. A sense of normality — aside from the absence of so many British women and children due to the evacuation — resumed in the Colony, sparking considerable resentment against the government from the Hong Kong-based husbands of those evacuees (who were not allowed to return). On 10 September 1941, Hong Kong's new governor — Sir Mark Young — arrived, though he left his family in Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, relationships between Japan and America and Britain deteriorated as the latter two countries hindered Japan's access to oil. Finally, on 8 December 1941 — eighteen months after that evacuation — the Japanese attacked Hong Kong (and Hawaii, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines — all the territories bounding the sea-lanes they needed to dominate to ensure they could seize and transport oil from the Dutch East Indies).

Hong Kong's defences were worryingly finite. It had long been recognized in London that Hong Kong could not be defended from serious attack without Britain allocating an unrealistic level of resources to its defence. At best, it might be possible to maintain a garrison strong enough to hold an attacker off until relieved by British forces from Singapore or elsewhere. However, the drain on Britain's military strength from a war already two years old, and the simultaneous Japanese attack on Singapore, made even that impossible. There was perhaps some vague hope until HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales* were sunk off Malaya just two days after the Pacific War began, but from that point defeat became certain.

Hong Kong's defenders, British, Indian, Canadian, Hong Kong and Volunteer residents of many other nationalities, did their best. They inflicted surprisingly heavy casualties on the vastly superior attacking force, but 10% of their number were killed (and two or three times that wounded) in the

process. And all that was achieved was a slight slow-down of the invasion timetable.

By 11 December Kowloon and the mainland had fallen. On 18 December Hong Kong Island itself was invaded, and by 25 December Sir Mark Young had no option but to surrender the Colony. The shock was horrendous. The great British Empire had lost a hugely rich and successful hundred-year-old Crown Colony to an Asian invader. The British civilians there, now being rounded up in preparation for incarceration in internment camps, were frightened and bitter. Many blamed the government.

In fact, however, the Hong Kong government had been largely powerless. The civilian evacuation of mid-1940, which included Alabaster's wife and pregnant daughter, had been ordered by London, not Hong Kong. And while the Hong Kong government had fought for local "loyal" Chinese and Indians to be included in the evacuation, it had been Australia's "white only" policy that had largely prevented this. British families had complained that they were being forcibly evacuated, while Chinese and Indian (and Eurasian) families had complained they were not! The local government was equally sidelined when it came to the Colony's defence. The allocation of British forces to the garrison was out of their hands. The decision to field just six infantry battalions (two Canadian having been added at the last minute) and no modern air power whatsoever had again been taken in London. There was also, of course, a Royal Artillery contingent and a small Royal Naval presence, but arguably just enough to show "face" rather than actually attempt serious resistance. Really the only parts of defence handled by the local government had been the local Volunteer and Auxiliary forces. And these had in fact performed very well; a point rather lost to the population in the overwhelming face of defeat.

The survivors of the military forces were swiftly rounded up and placed in military prisoner-of-war camps (except for those wounded still in hospitals). The very senior personnel, such as Sir Mark Young and the top military brass, were interned outside Hong Kong. Local civilians and "third nationals" were left in the city to fend for themselves, and "enemy" civilians (primarily British, but also Americans, Dutch and a handful from many other nationalities) were interned in Stanley Civilian Internment Camp on Hong Kong Island's south coast. That latter group comprised all the remaining British members of the local government, plus the merchants, teachers, doctors and all other elements of the British community. Among them were quite a large number of women (and their children) who "should" have evacuated but had found reasons not to go. There was resentment. Resentment against the government for the evacuation and for the defeat, resentment against those who could have been evacuated for being more mouths to feed from the few supplies in the camp, and resentment against the Japanese. While essentially the root of

all resentment was that internees had insufficient food, privacy and entertainment, that made it no easier for the targets to bear.

Initially resentment against authority had hindered government staff in establishing any real control over internment, but the internees themselves swiftly realized that some form of organization would be essential for survival. Food and lodging needed to be distributed reasonably equitably, law and order needed to be maintained amongst the interned, relationships with the Japanese authorities had to be established. Gimson, supported by Alabaster and the others, eventually earned grudging respect for diplomatically but doggedly taking control. Life at Stanley Internment Camp was never easy or comfortable, but their efforts arguably made it as orderly and survivable as possible.

## The Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong

The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong lasted from 25 December 1941 to 30 August 1945;<sup>4</sup> the period, usually known as “the three years and eight months” (Cantonese: *saam-nin-ling-baat-go-yjut*), brought destruction, oppressive rule, privation, hunger, forced migration and arbitrary brutality to the city and its multi-ethnic population. The sharp decline of the population number in Hong Kong, from more than 1.5 million in December 1941 to just over 500,000 in August 1945, is a clear indication of the disastrous nature of the experience.

The plight of Hong Kong and Hongkongers under the Japanese rule was not only the result of deliberate brutality perpetuated by some of the Japanese decision makers but also of the inability of the Japanese government in Tokyo to coordinate the many Japanese military and civilian authorities in different parts of Asia, ineffective leadership on the spot, lack of checks and balances in civil–military relations in wartime Japan, and the ongoing war against the Allied nations that Japan could not win.

Only weeks before the invasion of Hong Kong, the Japanese had come up with principles for managing Allied Powers’ ex-colonies captured by Japanese forces. Restoration of order, extraction of strategic resources and self-sufficiency of the occupying forces were seen as primary objectives. The occupied areas would be mostly under military rule, with tight control over economic activities. It was stipulated that the occupation authority should not improve the locals’ livelihood to an extent that would obstruct the extraction of strategic resources and the self-sufficiency of the occupying forces.

Following these principles, the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy’s local representatives entered a separate agreement on managing Hong Kong

4. The research work of this section is supported by the General Research Fund provided by the Research Grants Council of Hong Kong (project title “The Japanese ‘Total-State’ Experiment in Hong Kong, 1942–1945”, project no. 12600219).

immediately before the war. The army was designated to administer the territory, while the navy would take over the Royal Navy facilities and be responsible for maritime duties such as port management. However, this local arrangement was thrown out of the window almost immediately when the British garrison surrendered, as the army and navy struggled to control different districts and facilities in Hong Kong. This lack of co-operation between the Japanese Army, Navy and civilian officials plagued Japanese rule throughout the war.

Initially, a military administration was set up, staffed by the officers of the 23rd Army responsible for taking Hong Kong. Meanwhile, British officials (including Grenville Alabaster) were interned first in Prince's Building as well as several rundown hotels along the *praya* and then in Stanley. This Japanese military administration, however, was short-lived because of army–navy rivalry. The compromise was the formation of the Hong Kong Occupation Government (*honkon senryōchi sōtokubu*)<sup>5</sup> in late February 1942, headed by Isogai Rensuke, a retired lieutenant general who had experience of managing the economy of Manchuria, as the chief of staff of the Kwantung Army. Though a close associate of Tojo Hideki, the prime minister, he was forced to retire after the disastrous Nomonhan Campaign. Isogai was a general officer of average competence and little charisma. However, he was given almost dictatorial power, as checks and balances were non-existent, and Hong Kong was responsible to the Imperial General Headquarters (*daihonei*) alone. Throughout his governorship, Isogai largely ruled Hong Kong by decree, although the Japanese also set up powerless advisory bodies such as the Hong Kong Chinese Representative Council (Cantonese: *waa-man-doi-biu-wui*) and the Hong Kong Chinese Consultation Councils (Cantonese: *waa-man-hip-ji-wui*). Isogai relied on the notorious Military Police Corps (Kempeitai) to ensure his orders were obeyed. The Kempeitai, about 200- to 400-strong, and supported by around 3,000 local auxiliaries, was given various duties without any oversight. Such duties ranged from counter-espionage to censoring the press and even expulsion of “unwanted population”. This overburdened but unchecked force gradually degenerated into a corrupt and ineffective one that tarnished the Japanese image but achieved little. It failed to stamp out Allied resistance activities and often perpetuated unspeakable brutality against local populations, interned civilians, prisoners of war, neutrals and even the Japanese. Compared to the British one, the Japanese judicial system in Hong Kong was draconian, with a single military court handling almost all criminal cases. The jury system was abolished, and defendants, who were often tortured by the Kempeitai, were at the mercy of military judges. The civil code and the civil court were mostly non-existent, and the Kempeitai could jail anyone without trial for up to three months.

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5. Japanese in brackets, unless otherwise specified.



In theory, Hong Kong enjoyed a high status among the occupied territories. Such status was shown by the fact that the Japanese government sanctioned the construction of a large temple in the Botanic Garden and a monument on Bowen Hill to commemorate all the Japanese war dead in China. However, Hong Kong became an “orphan” among the various Japanese authorities in Asia, such as the Southern Army that was based in Singapore and the Japanese forces in the Philippines. The awkward position of Hong Kong in the Japanese Empire was not helped by Isogai’s ambition to turn it into a base for Japanese political intrigue against the Chinese Nationalist Government. This attempt led to alienation between the Hong Kong and the Japanese army commands in China (the China Expeditionary Army and the 23rd Army in South China). Meanwhile, Tokyo was overwhelmed by the war against the Allied Powers and the complex economic and logistics problems that entailed, and could only urge Hong Kong not to rely on Japan for food and resources.

With little support from the outside, it was impossible for the Japanese authorities in Hong Kong, however well intentioned some of its staff members were, to sustain its population. The war also disrupted the maritime trade in Asia that helped feed Hong Kong in peacetime. The Japanese forces stripped Hong Kong of strategic materials, from rice stocks and financial reserves to motor vehicles, scientific equipment, and even books from public and private libraries. Tokyo urged Hong Kong to remove the less “useful” citizens to avoid an impending famine. Unable to feed the population, the Japanese authority decided to arrange for the Hongkongers, many of whom were locally born, to “return to their ancestral land” (Cantonese: *gwai-heung*). As a result, hundreds of thousands of Hongkongers left their home for China, either via land routes through the New Territories or sea routes via Macau, Kongmoon and Canton. Between 6 January and 19 February 1942 alone, 554,000 left Hong Kong.<sup>6</sup> Some were given money by the Occupation Government or charity organizations before they went; others left after selling their properties and belongings. The refugees encountered bandits and pirates along the way, and an unknown number succumbed to illness, hunger or exposure. Unsatisfied with the progress of the evacuation, however, the Occupation Government started to remove “loitering” people forcibly. Many were forced into boats that sailed without ever landing or were shipped to outlying islands to be starved to death. Thousands were recruited or forced to work on Hainan Island. Many did not return. According to an internal report compiled by the Japanese Occupation Government, 1,094,654 had left Hong Kong by the end of 1944.<sup>7</sup> A Japanese civilian official bravely exposed the brutal treatment of the locals

6. Kwong Chi Man, *Chongguang zhilu: riju xianggang yu taipingyang zhanzheng* (Hong Kong: Cosmos, 2015), 175.

7. “Reference Material for Governor Isogai (Isogai shiryō), 1945”, Hong Kong Museum of History Collection, loaned by K. L. Leung to Hong Kong Museum of History, p. 92.



by the Kempeitai in January 1944, but this did not prevent the Kempeitai from continuing the forced migration policy until the end of the year, when the head of the Kempeitai was removed due to alleged corruption.<sup>8</sup>

To maintain Hong Kong as a port that not only could take care of itself but also support the Japanese war effort, the Occupation Government introduced a state-run economy to maximize efficiency. Major British and Allied enterprises were taken over by the Occupation Government, which then appointed management teams from Taiwan and Japan to operate them. Banks related to the Allied Powers were liquidated, and Hong Kong bankers were press-ganged to facilitate the process. “Conglomerations” of key commodity trades and industries were formed to introduce state coordination and control. An ambitious plan to develop the New Territories was devised by the Taiwan Development Company, a Japanese state enterprise. The Hong Kong dollar, one of the few stable currencies in the region, was replaced by the military scrip (*guan-piu*) issued by the Occupation Government, at fixed price, in effect robbing the people of their wealth in exchange for paper notes backed by nothing but the fate of the Japanese armed forces. On 28 December 1941, one military yen was worth two Hong Kong dollars; it became four in July 1942, ostensibly to hasten the phasing-out of the Hong Kong currency. In the meantime, the Japanese forced the General Manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, Sir Vandeleur Grayburn, to sign the unissued Hong Kong dollar notes. These notes and those obtained from the public were used to pay for Japan’s war in South China.

The Occupation Government also rationed rice and other daily necessities such as firewood and sugar to control food and commodities consumption. Throughout the war, there was never enough food for the population; those who could afford the price could obtain extra from the black market, while those who could not relied on rationing. People had to spend hours queuing for rationed rice that was often of poor quality or even infused with tree bark or other inedible substances. Hunger was the primary concern for everyone in Hong Kong, except for major collaborators and senior Japanese officials. With little support from the military, the civilian branch of the Occupation Government constantly struggled to feed the local population. This situation partly explains the attitude shown by officials of the Foreign Affairs Department of the Occupation Government who managed the Stanley Internment Camp, where Alabaster stayed throughout the war.

Hongkongers tried to survive in these contexts. Some turned to the Japanese for protection and personal aggrandisement, but at the same time tried to help the locals. People such as Chan Lim-pak and Aw Boon Haw

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8. “Report without Title (submitted by Shirai Kichiji)”, 20/1/10, Gaimushō kiroku [Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], Japan Centre for Asian Historical Records, Ref: B08060396500, pp. 9–13.

were cases in point.<sup>9</sup> Hundreds of thousands chose to leave, ranging from Sir Robert Hotung<sup>10</sup> (who left immediately before the war) to many others who tried to survive in China. Thousands were forced to work for the Japanese in dockyards, power plants, waterworks and other industries to survive. Eurasians and Indians either joined the Japanese or faced the difficult prospect of living under them; many were arrested, tortured and murdered. Hundreds of Indian prisoners of war were forced to work for the Japanese; those who refused faced starvation. Portuguese, Filipino and people of other ethnicities also struggled to survive, as everyday life became increasingly impossible. Hundreds, including many local ex-servicemen from the British armed forces, chose active resistance against the Japanese by joining the British Army Aid Group (BAAG) or other British units across the border in China or even inside Hong Kong. Nationalist Chinese and Chinese communists also maintained resistance activities in Hong Kong, with the former having agents active in the urban area and the latter gaining footholds in the New Territories such as Sai Kung and Lantau. The latter first co-operated with the British and then the Americans.

Due to lack of resources and negligence, public services in Hong Kong rapidly declined. In schools and colleges, the number of pupils and students fell from more than 100,000 to merely 3,000, despite the Japanese attempt to introduce Japanese education. As the Japanese authority concentrated its resources to inoculate the population against infectious diseases such as cholera, the public health service in Hong Kong largely ceased to function. The responsibility of taking care of the population was left to local charity organizations and religious institutions, such as the Tung Wah Hospitals.

From late 1943, the tide of war turned against Japan. For those in Hong Kong, the beginning of the end was welcomed; however, it also meant further suffering for the locals. In the second half of 1944, the American air campaign against Hong Kong gained steam, with a number of large-scale air raids that killed more than a thousand in total. American submarines were increasingly active near Hong Kong too. The end of 1944 marked the end of the Japanese attempt to seriously govern Hong Kong, as Isogai was recalled to Japan and the Occupation Government became a subordinate organization of the 23rd Army, with its commander being appointed the new governor. This governor, Lieutenant General Tanaka Hisakazu, seldom visited Hong Kong.

During the last months of the war, the Japanese attempted in vain to keep Hong Kong as a shipping base in the face of US air attacks. The food situation became desperate in the early summer of 1945, and it seemed that famine would be inevitable later that year. The sudden surrender of Japan on

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9. Both Chan and Aw served in the committee of representative organized by the Japanese authorities and various public offices under the Japanese. Aw went to meet the Emperor and Tojo in 1943.

10. Robert Hotung was an influential Eurasian businessman and public figure in Hong Kong and the head of the Hotung family that had a long history in Hong Kong.

15 August saved Hong Kong from disaster and allowed the British to retake the Colony. A fleet was dispatched to Hong Kong from Fiji and Australia, and the BAAG was ordered to send agents to notify Franklin Gimson, the interned Colonial Secretary, to take over Hong Kong. In the meantime, Nationalist China and Britain appealed to the US government, claiming their right to take Hong Kong. The Chinese communist guerrillas in the New Territories attacked the Japanese garrison, hoping to expand their area of control, only to be beaten back. As Tokyo and Nanjing (the headquarters of the Japanese forces in China) remained indecisive, the Japanese garrison in Hong Kong remained in control. When the United States did not stand in the way of Britain reoccupying Hong Kong, the Japanese garrison also decided to surrender themselves to the incoming British fleet and allowed Gimson to set up a temporary office outside Stanley Internment Camp on 26 August. It was not done until two days later. The British fleet, led by Vice Admiral Cecil Harcourt, arrived on 30 August. The Alabaster Journal is vague on these later events as Grenville was bedridden due to illness.

Only recently have there been systematic studies of the death toll of the Japanese occupation. According to the latest research and estimations, 220,000 to 360,000 Hongkongers died of various causes during the war.<sup>11</sup> Many died as refugees while thousands were killed as a direct result of combat (the Battle of Hong Kong and the subsequent Allied bombing campaign).

## The Stanley Internment

While the Japanese had detailed preparations for the invasion of European and American colonies in Asia, they made little or no provision for taking care of tens of thousands of European civilians in different parts of Asia. Before the taking of Hong Kong, the Japanese Army and Navy had agreements on how to divide up the infrastructures and other spoils of war among themselves, but they had no plans as to what to do with the more than 2,500 British and other Allied civilians in Hong Kong, known to the Japanese as “enemy nationals”. During the first few weeks of the Japanese occupation, the Japanese military authority was busy setting up effective rule over Hong Kong and had gathered the Allied civilians at hotels in Wanchai and Central, with a small number of them still living at the Peak. The senior British officials were lodged in Prince’s Building and set up a symbolic government there, which mainly focused on engaging with the Japanese, registering the names of civilian internees, finding and burying war-dead, recording accounts of war atrocities and providing assistance where they could to internees. The Japanese military authority saw

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11. Kwong, *Chongguang zhilu*, 526–8; Tony Banham, “Hong Kong’s Civilian Fatalities of the Second World War”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 59 (2019): 46.

the Allied civilians as a hindrance to the war effort, and only Japanese diplomats showed some desire to provide resources or do anything to take care of their needs. The British colonial officials proposed concentrating the Allied civilians at the Peak, but this suggestion was turned down.

In late January, the Japanese military authority sent all the Allied civilians to Stanley, including senior government officials such as Gimson, Alabaster and Butters. The total number of internees in January 1942 was around 2,800, including 2,460 British, 311 American and 67 Dutch nationals.<sup>12</sup> Only a handful of Allied civilians were allowed to live outside the internment camp, including Director of Medical Services Percy Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke, the bankers who were forced to liquidate the banks, technicians such as Arthur May, and Kennedy Skipton, who claimed to be an Irish national. The governor, Sir Mark Young, was sent to Shanghai in February 1942.<sup>13</sup> The camp was originally run by the Foreign Affairs Section of the Japanese military authority, and a Chinese head was appointed. He was, however, soon replaced, and the camp was put under the control of Colonel Isao Tokunaga, the commander of the prisoner-of-war camps in Hong Kong.

Although some of the most senior colonial government officials were among those in the internment camp, many other internees were not ready to accept their authority unconditionally. Before these officials had arrived, the internees had held an election and created a committee (later known as the Communal Council) with elected members, including businessmen and professionals. The continuation of the committee could be seen as a vote of no-confidence in colonial officials, who were regarded as being ineffective both before and during the Battle of Hong Kong. Gimson, the Colonial Secretary, maintained that the British rule of Hong Kong had not ended after the garrison's surrender and tried to maintain a semblance of government in Stanley Camp. After the departure of most of the American and Canadian internees in June 1942, he gradually enhanced the influence of the government officials over the Communal Council, eventually controlling it when he became the chairman of the British Community Council that replaced the Communal Council that was formed to handle some of the camp affairs.<sup>14</sup> He also took control of the matters such as repatriation. On the one hand, the anti-colonial government attitude among some of the internees lingered long after the war. On the other, it seems that some of the internees had failed to realize the difficulties faced by the colonial officials, the Communal Council

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12. Geoffrey Emerson, *Hong Kong Internment, 1942–1945: Life in the Japanese Civilian Camp at Stanley* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), 59.

13. And then to Taiwan and, during the final months of the war, Shenyang.

14. Alan Birch, "Confinement and Constitutional Conflict in Occupied Hong Kong 1941–45", *Hong Kong Law Journal* 3, Part I (1973): 293–315.

and the representative of the International Red Cross, Rudolf Zindel, when trying to promote the welfare of the internees under the circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

During the early months of the internment, the most important issue which with internees were concerned was repatriation. Many internees believed that they would be repatriated soon, but the process took much longer than expected. By the end of June 1942, 377 internees, mostly Americans, were sent home on *Asama Maru*. Many internees tried to provide real or rather shaky claims of American or Canadian citizenship in order to leave Hong Kong. The Alabaster Journal mentions occasions when such internees asked Alabaster to try to help them. During subsequent months, many held onto the hope that they would be repatriated. Meanwhile, Gimson resisted British civilians' urging to repatriate all Britons in Hong Kong, as he believed that they were needed if and when Japan had to give up Hong Kong. Another bout of repatriation took place in September 1943, when 110 American and Canadian citizens were sent home. Since the second half of 1942, the situation in the camp had gradually declined, mirroring Japan's fortune in the war. As the Allied forces started to threaten Japanese shipping, Hong Kong faced a chronic shortage of food and resources. The internment camp was inevitably affected. From the Alabaster Journal, one can notice the constant mention of food, clothing and other amenities, reflecting the shortage in everything. The lack of paper and pencil also forced Alabaster to write less, as his entries show.

The internees were helped by the Chinese, Indians and Eurasians outside the camp, who sent in food and amenities despite the prevailing shortage of everything in Hong Kong. Alabaster mentioned that he had received food parcels from Mehdi Mohammed Nemazee, a shipowner. There were incidents of brutality and aggression towards the internees, such as slapping and beatings for offences such as failure to salute a sentry. However, some Indian sentries showed sympathy towards the internees, sometimes at considerable personal risk. Kiyoshi Watanabe, a Japanese reverend sent to Hong Kong as an interpreter, worked in Stanley Camp in late 1944 to early 1945 and tried to help the internees obtain medical supplies.<sup>16</sup>

The internees, who came from various backgrounds and professions, organized a variety of activities ranging from lectures to amateur drama. Despite the conditions of the camp and the stress of war, there were nineteen weddings in the camp and forty-six births. A school, run by Edna Atkins, helped around 180 children to continue their studies. Although Alabaster had little connection with the educational work of the camp, he too picked up Spanish in the camp and sometimes attended the study group organized by Duncan Sloss, the vice chancellor of the University of Hong Kong. Some of the

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15. For a detailed discussion of Gimson and Zindel, see Emerson, *Hong Kong Internment, 1942–1945*, 8–24.

16. Liam Nolan, *Small Man of Nanataki* (London: Catholic Book Club, 1967).

colonial officials had discussions about the problems of Hong Kong, ranging from fisheries to police reform. Edward Wynne-Jones, the postmaster general, and William Jones, the chief draughtsman of the Hong Kong Public Works Department, even designed a stamp to commemorate the liberation of Hong Kong in 1944.

Escape and resistance activities existed in the internment camp, too, although the scale was smaller than that in the prisoner-of-war camps. As early as March 1942, a number of internees escaped from the camp, including Superintendent Walter Thompson, who later worked for MI5 in South China. Following that, the Japanese tightened up security and the freedom of the internees was considerably limited. The Defence Secretary, John Fraser, led a small circle of internees who operated a radio set that could receive BBC broadcasts. The news was then circulated among a number of senior government officials, including Gimson and Alabaster. Through Dr Harry Talbot, money from Grayburn of the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank was transferred to the camp to obtain medical supplies for the internees. These activities led to mass arrests of the internees in July 1943, resulting in the execution of Fraser and six others and the death of Grayburn in prison. After that, active resistance ceased to exist. During the last few years of the war, the internees noticed the increased Allied air activities over Hong Kong. These were also recorded in the Alabaster Journal. These attacks, however, led to the fatal friendly-fire incident on 16 January 1945, when one of the fighter-bombers from USS *Enterprise* bombed a bungalow in the camp, killing fourteen.<sup>17</sup> In the same month, the Japanese gave up any serious attempt to govern Hong Kong, and the management of the camp was transferred to the 23rd Army. This arrangement remained in force until the surrender of Japan.

The experience of internment differed for different people, despite the constant privation and the threat of living under the Japanese. Graham Heywood noted that “an enthusiastic biologist was full of his doings; he had grown champion vegetables, had seen all sorts of rare birds, and had run a successful yeast brewery”. Another told him “it was hell on earth”.<sup>18</sup> For some of the internees, the internment was a humbling experience. Barbara Anslow, the daughter of a naval engineer, and a stenographer, suggested that the experience of internment “altered [her] outlook on racism and religion”.<sup>19</sup> Many internees were unwilling to talk about their experiences openly until decades later.

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17. Steven K. Bailey, “The Bombing of Bungalow C: Friendly Fire at the Stanley Civilian Internment Camp”, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 57 (2017): 108–26.

18. Graham Heywood, *It Won't Be Long Now: The Diary of a Hong Kong Prisoner of War* (Hong Kong: Blacksmith Books, 2015), 159.

19. Barbara Anslow, *Tin Hats and Rice: A Diary of Life as a Hong Kong Prisoner of War, 1941–1945* (Hong Kong: Blacksmith Books, 2018), 335.

## Chaloner Grenville Alabaster: A Biography

Grenville was born in China, in the Yangtze River trading port of Hankow (part of modern-day Wuhan) in 1880. His father, also confusingly called by the same rather wonderful Victorian name, was Sir Chaloner Grenville Alabaster KCMG (1838–1898), at the time the consular official in Hankow. His mother, Laura Abbie MacGowan Alabaster (1847–1924),<sup>20</sup> was also born in China, in Ningbo, Zhejiang, the daughter of Dr Daniel Jerome MacGowan (1815–1893) and Mary Anne Osborne. Dr MacGowan was an American Baptist missionary, surgeon and scientist who arrived in Hong Kong in 1843 following the First Opium War, and proceeded to Ningbo, where he established a missionary station and medical clinic. Grenville's father, Chaloner, known as Chals,<sup>21</sup> or The Buster to his friends,<sup>22</sup> was the son of a second-generation East End hat and bonnet maker in Victorian London. His parents were entrepreneurial Victorians and managed a well-established shop at 58 Piccadilly,<sup>23</sup> but both died of tuberculosis when he was about eighteen months old, and he and his two orphaned brothers were brought up by a bohemian artist, Mary Ann Criddle (*née* Alabaster), and her husband Harry, who was also a hat maker.

After studying Chinese at King's College London, Chaloner arrived in Hong Kong in 1855; he was among the first batch of young Chinese interpreters trained in Britain. His brother Henry (1836–1884), similarly trained, was posted initially to China and then to Siam and spent most of his career there, becoming an interpreter and advisor to the progressive King Chulalongkorn. Despite showing reckless bravery and being involved in almost every conflict that took place between Westerners and Chinese, including the Second Opium War (where he was tasked with accompanying Viceroy Yeh Mingchen, the captured Governor of Guangdong Province, to exile in Calcutta), the Taiping Rebellion, wars against pirates and the Joint British–French expedition to Peking, and being attached to the Ever Victorious Army under General Gordon, he outlived almost all the other interpreters to finally retire as Consul General in Canton in 1892. During his career he was also instrumental in establishing joint Chinese–Western courts of law in China coast communities to mediate cross-cultural legal issues.

The younger Grenville was therefore the third generation of a family who already had broad experience within China, as well as interests in local customs and culture and related legal issues and affairs. Grenville's older brother Cecil died at the age of two in Amoy. The children's early education took place in a private tutorial school run by a headmistress in Shanghai, while his father and

20. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56892884/laura-abbie-alabaster>.

21. Chals (from letters in the family archives).

22. Obituary, see <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/56807366/chaloner-alabaster>.

23. <https://londonstreetviews.wordpress.com/2017/02/28/charles-alabaster-bonnet-maker/>.



mother moved around various consulates across China, before they settled in Shanghai for a few years due to his father's appointment there as the Vice Consul, and finally as Consul in Canton. Grenville's secondary education was at Tonbridge School, Kent, close to the family home of his grandmother, Mary Ann Osborne.

Grenville was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple in 1904 and gained his early experience as a lawyer in the King's Bench Division, at the Old Bailey and on the Western Circuit. As a young lawyer, he showed not only great promise but also an almost encyclopaedic mind, and contributed "on legal subjects to various works of reference including 'The Laws of England' and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*".<sup>24</sup> In 1908 he authored a substantial book on the legal aspect of moneylending.<sup>25</sup> Two years later, he returned to Hong Kong with his new wife Winifred (Win) Mainwaring, later Lady Alabaster. During his time in London, he had also maintained his connection with Asia by acting as the secretary of the China Association, a merchant's body established to represent the interests of British companies trading with China, Hong Kong and Japan.

Alabaster contributed extensively to the legal development of Hong Kong as well as public service. Within two years of taking up his career in Hong Kong, he temporarily acted as Attorney General for the first time in 1911 and again in 1912, 1913 and 1928, and was appointed to the substantive position from 1930 to 1945 (including the war years from 1942 to 1945 where a symbolic attempt was made to maintain a semblance of continuity of government even from within Stanley Internment Camp). In 1912, he was invited by the Colonial Secretary to revise the Statute Laws of Hong Kong, which he did with great diligence — it was noted in the Legislative Council minutes when they were endorsed that "[w]e all know that Mr. Alabaster is a man engaged in an arduous profession, and that this duty which he has undertaken was a labour of love, and I am quite sure we all endorse what your Excellency has said with regard to the enormous amount of work entailed in bringing out these new Ordinances".<sup>26</sup>

During the First World War, he served as Deputy Cable Censor and in 1918 received an OBE in recognition of his services with the Cable Censorate<sup>27</sup> — this was a top-secret initiative during the war to take advantage of Britain's dominant control of the newly laid global cable networks and to cut, intercept, decode and disrupt enemy transmissions, and the office in Hong Kong was a key node in this initiative.<sup>28</sup>

24. *Alabaster Chronicle* 17 (Autumn 2001): <http://www.alabaster.org.uk/chron17.htm>.

25. *The Law relating to the Transactions of Money-lenders and Borrowers*.

26. Hong Kong Legislative Council Minutes, 28 August 1913, <https://www.legco.gov.hk/1913/h130828.pdf>.

27. Supplement to the *London Gazette*, [www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/30576/supplement/3287](http://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/30576/supplement/3287).

28. BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42367551>.



In 1919, 1924 and 1925 he was an unofficial member of the Legislative Council.<sup>29</sup> He acted as Chief Justice of Hong Kong in 1937. When he was in Asia, he was also admitted to practice before the British Supreme Court for China in Shanghai. In 1915 he was permitted, by courtesy, to appear before the United States Court for China. The family remembers him as a workaholic and his daughter Rosalie claimed that she hardly saw him when she returned to Hong Kong in the 1920s and 1930s as he was always off early to work, while she was always returning very late from her social engagements.

Alabaster was therefore the author of a number of substantial legal publications, which attest to his diligence and sharp mind. He was also, more controversially, the author of a 1920 paper titled “Race Mixture in Hong Kong”, in the *London Eugenics Review*, in which he argued that marriage between certain races should be a punishable offence. It is notable that, as mentioned, his father Chaloner Alabaster had been deeply involved in the formation of pioneering joint Chinese–British courts focused on resolving cross-cultural legal issues. The article clearly indicates that Grenville was taking that a step further to provide a legal basis for Eurasians, who in some cases identified more closely with Chinese culture and in others more closely with Western culture, or who moved between the cultures, in the light of the fact that some Eurasians were becoming highly successful businesspeople and members of society. However, his conclusions are clearly flawed. In the *Oxford Handbook on the History of Eugenics* it was noted that “Alabaster’s recommendations were never implemented, but his proposition nevertheless reflected a ‘deep-seated uneasiness about the shifting identities of Eurasians on the part of the European communities, as well as a potential mistrust of the Eurasians by the Chinese communities’.”<sup>30</sup> In the same publication it notes that he was also involved in the issue of female slavery, which ultimately led to the practice being outlawed in Hong Kong.

As Attorney General, Alabaster was provided with official quarters at No. 276 on the Peak. The family also had a cottage in an area reserved for Europeans on Cheung Chau Island. Grenville was an active steward of the Jockey Club and his daughter Rosalie was a keen rider, joining horse races in the New Territories and often racing as a female jockey in both Hong Kong and Macau in the pre-war years. In fact, Rosalie was a pioneering female jockey in Hong Kong. Prior to the Japanese invasion, his wife and daughter were evacuated by ship to Australia, where Rosalie gave birth to his first grandchild Mary Margaret. However, Grenville received very little news and no letter or

29. The first time he was appointed when Henry Pollock acted as Attorney General; the second time he was appointed when Pollock was away; the third time he was appointed when Henry Pollock again acted as Attorney General. See *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 4 July 1919, p. 300; 5 September 1924, p. 467; 10 July 1925, p. 369.

30. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 267.

other communication from them until April 1943; the Journal records his feelings of relief and delight each time he received rare news of his family, and the sense of worry he felt when he did not.

Following his father, Alabaster was a senior Mason and held the title of District Grand Master of English Freemasonry for Hong Kong and South China. There are frequent mentions throughout his Journal noting his interest in and close relationship with other interned Masons. A keen collector of Chinese china and antiquities, his personal sadness when his entire collection was looted with almost unseemly haste immediately after the Japanese victory is evident. But he does not show bitterness or allow his personal feelings to override his sense of duty or interfere with his work.

During the period after the surrender and the long years in the camps, Grenville and Gimson tried to maintain a semblance of continuity of government, taking a leading role in communicating with the Japanese and mediating in the camp on a wide range of daily issues. Grenville could be somewhat stiff when confronted with what he considered unreasonable demands, where he felt that people had to take some responsibility for the implications of their past actions (for instance, where someone who should have evacuated, when requested to do so, from Hong Kong prior to the invasion had refused that opportunity and then demanded priority with evacuation from the camp) or where people seemed to be focused on their own rather than the wider interests of the community. But, overall, he comes across as fair, kind and considerate of others.

By the end of the war, he was virtually bedridden and unable to participate in any meaningful way with the liberation process, though he was introduced by the Colonial Secretary to Admiral Harcourt, who had commanded the liberation of Hong Kong, during the Flag-Raising Ceremony at Stanley Camp, and he was one of the sixty to be selected for evacuation on the hospital ship *Oxfordshire*. His health and eyesight had been damaged by his time in internment, and his family back in Britain, having lost everything in Hong Kong, was living in near poverty in accommodation so small his wife worried, before he returned, about whether she could manage to look after him.

Yet after a short and happy sojourn back home in Britain, Grenville returned again to Hong Kong for a few months in 1946 to assist with the re-establishment of government, including acting as Chairman of the Monuments and War Memorials Committee. This included authorizing the destruction of the Japanese War Memorial on Bowen Hill. He also played a role in approving the return of the statue of Queen Victoria and the two Hongkong and Shanghai Bank bronze lions, which had been taken to Japan to be melted down, and were found with other scrap at Osaka Docks after the war. Grenville continued to suffer from ill-health; he finally returned to Britain and passed away in Bournemouth in 1958.

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# 3

## Book III: Stanley Camp in 1943

### Part I: Early 1943: Evacuation Issues Continued

#### *January 1943*

During the night of the 31st December 1942 six shots were heard from somewhere in the gaol. Whether it was an execution taking place or just some intoxicated Japanese sentry trying to be funny we could not tell.<sup>1</sup> The room above us had just been vacated as a result of the last exodus to Shanghai and some enthusiastic Scots seeing the New Year in used it for a dance and first-footing revelry, but they stopped the noise after midnight.

As most people were going to use food from their own Red Cross or other parcels, the kitchen staffs decided to cook only one meal that day, and this was issued at 1.20 p.m. In the afternoon, Pryde of the P.W.D. got up an England v Ireland football match to which Mr. Gimson and I were invited, being given reserved seats with the Football Committee. I called on the Owen Hughes to wish them a happy New Year.

Saturday the 2nd of January was a fine day so I did some washing in the morning and in the afternoon I watched another football match, at which Tweed Bay Hospital beat St. Stephen's. Bellamy had tea with me. Then I went again to the Owen Hughes and heard that Mrs. Harston had burnt her hand. I passed Potter on the stairs and wished him the compliments of the season which he reciprocated with "many of them".

Nothing worth noting happened on Sunday the 3rd. It was a quiet fine day, rather warm and the wind changed to westerly, but it got colder during the night as the wind went east again. Remittance list from town reached the office on the 4th. It showed that Potter had twice remittances of M.Y. 200 in December from Chester Bennett and he had previously received another M.Y. 200 from Edmondston. As in the case of our remittances from Selwyn Clarke these sums were evidently intended to finance a group rather than one

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1. The execution of Lo Tung-fan, a lawyer and a Police Reserve officer who attempted to organize underground resistance in Hong Kong.

person. Looking over the gaol wall I could see a black Plymouth car which I recognized as my own. It was in the gaol compound.

The 5th was a cold day with low clouds and blue sky above. About 2 p.m. many sounds of distant explosions were heard, but we could not tell whether these were from bombs or merely target practice.<sup>2</sup>

Wednesday the 6th was a cold raw day. The Executive Legislative Council met as usual. The paper of the day before, which reached us that day, had a story attacking C. A. S. Russ, the solicitor. Davidson told me that the parties to the interminable Sheldon inquiry, which I described in my diary as “Jarndyce v Jarndyce”, were talking of an appeal to the Executive Legislative Council. This seemed premature, as, though the hearings had ceased, no judgments or report had been rendered. I told Davidson that it was not usual in government departmental inquiries to take sworn statements; but that I understood that that had been done in this case, as one of the parties had insisted on it.

On the 7th Yamashita interviewed Russ about the case mentioned in the *Hong Kong News*, and at the meeting Mr. Gimson, Max Bickerton, Jock Armstrong and Vera Armstrong were present. Afterwards Russ came to see me. Then I saw Mr. Gimson and it was decided that I should see Russ again the next day. In the evening Mr. Gimson and I went to a musical show at St. Stephen’s entitled “Uncle Tom’s Cabin”.

On the 8th I saw Russ in the morning and then at 2.30 had a meeting with him and Davidson, Blake, Brooks, Manleverer Brown, Armstrong, Wadeson, Watson and Loseby, all the practising solicitors in fact, whereat it was decided that Russ should refuse to sign a cheque he had been asked by Yamashita to sign, in favour of a Miss Choy; giving as reasons for the refusal the Internment, non-access to his firm’s books, and deprivation of facilities to do business. All the solicitors agreed to adopt a similar attitude to any such demands that might be made to them. L. R. Andrewes, the Registrar of the Supreme Court, was also present at the meeting.

On the 9th Cressall came to see me (as Mr. Gimson was out visiting Andrew Shields in the hospital) about getting a room for Williamson and himself, as rooms were vacant owing to the last Shanghai exodus. He also told me of a recent visit Sheldon and Watson had paid to Williamson.

On Sunday 10th, Mrs. Jenner told me that she wanted to be evacuated. She said that she represented the United Australian Newspapers and that she came to the Colony in December 1941 with MacDonald, the *Times* Correspondent, on her way to Manila from Chungking,<sup>3</sup> thinking that there would be lots of time. MacDonald had got away in a destroyer, but no destroyer had been provided for her! It was a dull day but not so cold.

2. No Allied air activities were recorded on that day so it was probably an exercise.

3. Chongqing.

The 11th was a cold day. The Sloss discussion group resumed its talks, which had been discontinued after the departure of the Americans in 1942. The group now numbered 21. Potter and Watson were asked to join it but declined for "personal reasons against Gimson". Some 250 letters dated July 1942 arrived from England and were addressed to about 100 people in the camp, including Deakin and W. J. Carrie.

On the 13th, Potter's petition, covering letter and memorandum, which seemed to have taken two or three months to prepare, were handed into the office. The *Hong Kong News* contained the third of three successive articles by one "Horace" and which were directed against Sir. Francis Bacon, British plutocrats and Freemasons! It was a cold day.

The 14th was not so cold as there was little wind. We got an issue of fish and pork instead of beef as the latter seemed to be unobtainable. Both seemed to me to be quite good of their kind.

On the 15th, A. W. Brown came and saw Mr. Gimson and myself regarding the Potter petition and commented on names and signatures that he knew. I met Jim Danby in the cemetery. He told me that he had signed the petition in the previous October when he thought food conditions were getting worse. He would not have signed it under present conditions.

On the 16th Zindel came in and saw about 60 internees. He brought news that Mrs. Man's husband was safe and well. I took the news down to her and to her roommates Daisy Turner and Beryl Skipwith. The *Hong Kong News* contained an announcement that Oda was to go to Tokio.

The 17th was a colder day. I spent the afternoon drafting Mr. Gimson's reply to the signatories of the Potter petition.

On the 18th, Selwyn Clarke's Informal Welfare Committee sent me a food parcel. Many other parcels from town arrived in the camp and also a lot of luggage from the hotel baggage rooms. It was a hot day. At the Sloss group meeting in the evening I gave a talk on the tenure of the Colony.

The 19th was a fine day. I got a Red Cross letter from A. Hoffmeister, the Swiss Consul at Shameen, Canton, dated the 10th December, 1942, giving greetings to myself and Owen Hughes. I replied, reciprocating the greetings and expressing the desire for news of our families. It had taken forty days for a Red Cross letter to travel eighty miles; but it was my first letter from outside the Colony for over a year.

Wednesday the 20th was a fine day but chilly. The Executive Legislative Council met as usual. Dr. Smalley and Richard Mills came to bridge in the evening.

On the 21st Mrs. Franklin returned my old Austin Reed coat and trousers, which she had mended with material from the waistcoat which I sacrificed for the purpose. The Camp Council had issued a bulletin containing a reference to a Swedish ship as possibly being obtainable for evacuation purposes and

Yamashita got very excited about it, thinking we had got hold of something definite. Perseverance Lodge members met at 6.30 in the evening.

On the 22nd, which like its predecessor was a fine day, I was issued by the Welfare with an excellent *mintoi* or Chinese quilt with which I was very pleased as I had felt the cold at night. Wynne Jones reported that he had news of the death of his wireless engineer at Cape D'Aguilar, an R.N.V.R. prisoner of war in Tokio. This engineer's wife had been killed during the blitz.

On the 23rd I drafted for Mr. Gimson his reply to the covering letter of the Potter petition.

Mrs. Franklin gave me some jam she had made from some tinned tomatoes I had given her. Miss Dyson sent a Chinese sausage for Mr. Gimson's and my breakfast the next day.

On Sunday the 24th, another fine coldish day, I drafted a reply to the Watson, Hall, Sturt memorandum. Miss Dyson and Mrs. Murrell came in to bridge and supper.

On the 25th Witham reported to Mr. Gimson that a copy of the Watson, Hall, Sturt memorandum had been left by someone in his room and Fraser reported to both of us that another copy had been given to him the day before by Sheldon. At the Sloss group meeting Wylie interrupted North twice to say that he hoped that the Hong Kong government would not prove as incompetent and corrupt in the future as it had been in the past, and when North said, "That seems rather personal", he hurriedly retorted, "It is not personal nor meant to be personal."

On the 26th, which was fine and warm, I weighed myself and found that I was now 142 lbs. (10 stone 2).

On the 27th, rather a cold day, the Executive Legislative Council met for their usual Wednesday meeting. Andrew Shields was still in hospital. The *Hong Kong News* acknowledged the Axis evacuation of Tripoli. There was a strong rumour in the camp that Sham Shui Po and other prisoner-of-war camps had been vacated.

The 28th was a fine hot day. The *Hong Kong News* gave an account of the Casa Blanca conference. In the evening Mr. Gimson and I went to bridge with Williamson and Cressall.

On the 29th, A. W. Black of Carmichael & Clarke, who was in charge of the workshops, took my reading glasses to see what he could do to prevent the crack in their frame parting altogether. The second performance of the "Jail Birds" concert, which I had meant to attend, was cancelled by order of the Japanese during the afternoon. Apparently they did not like the name. A. W. Black brought back my reading glasses, mended with a special hard-drying cement. Mr. Gimson told me that Sheldon had now [been] given a copy of the Watson-Hall-Sturt memorandum to Pennefather-Evans. It seemed that he was supplying copies to all the members of the original Communal Council.

On the 30th, a meeting of members of the Court of Hong Kong University was held and Sloss was asked to continue as Vice Chancellor for another year, as his term of office had expired. Mr. Gimson sent his reply to the Potter petition and to the covering letter; but the reply to the Watson–Hall–Sturt petition was not sent yet.

(On Sunday the 31st) Mr. Gimson held his usual weekly meeting for Cadets.

### *February 1943*

On the 1st February, Sheldon reported at the office that he had heard from Captain Penn that G. T. Lowry, the Second Magistrate, whose whereabouts or fate I had been seeking, had been killed on or about the 19th December, 1941, in the fighting round Mount Cameron. In the evening Mr. Gimson and I went to cocoa and bridge with Williamson and Cressall.

The 2nd February was damp and warm and inclined to drizzle — typically good joss as a prelude to Chinese New Year — old style. At a meeting of Zetland Lodge in the quarry that evening I read to the brethren a chapter from Joseph Fort Newton's book, *The Builders*. Wor. Bro. Hanlon presided at the meeting.

The 3rd was another damp day. There was the usual Wednesday meeting of the Executive Legislative Council. The camp was full of rumours, ranging from an Allied landing at Odessa to the intended evacuation to Japan of all internees of military age. Dr. Smalley and Richard Mills came in for bridge in the evening.

On Thursday reports came into the effect that an officer who had not been interned had escaped over the Colony's border.<sup>4</sup> I got three unexpected food parcels addressed to me from Mr. B. Basto, Miss A. Remedios and Mr. L. Roza Periera, whom I took to represent a Portuguese Welfare Committee. On my return from fetching them from up the Hill, I found Mrs. Leveson Campbell in great distress at the latest news of her husband in Bowen Road Hospital.

On the 6th I received military yen 15, equivalent to \$45 H.K., as the first payment of a similar general allowance for each adult internee — children received M.Y. 10 each. We were told that payment of this allowance had been sanctioned by the British government. We had been expecting M.Y. 20 each as that sum had been mentioned originally. Visiting Andrew Shields in hospital, Mr. Gimson was told by him that he had been threatened by Sheldon with a slander action for having said that the judges' inquiry was for the purpose of deciding whether Sheldon was fit for further service in the government.

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4. George Kennedy-Skipton.



## Book V: Stanley Camp in 1945

### Part I: Early 1945: Decline of the Japanese Rule in Hong Kong

#### *January 1945*

The first of January started my fourth year of internment, but the general feeling in camp was good, better than it had been in previous years, as all felt that this year would see the end of our captivity and so demands for an evacuation ship had died down. At midnight of New Year's Eve, Scottish "first-footers" and English carol singers started up; but Batty-Smith scared them off by shouting at them, though Mr. Gimson and I had enjoyed the friendly feeling that seemed now to pervade nearly all the camp. So, on New Year's Day we asked the carol singers to come back and sing to us. The visitors' book in the office was extensively signed and all I met gave New Year greetings. In the afternoon I went to visit Compton in Bungalow D. The threat to close the bungalows near the fence had never been carried out.

The 2nd was fine but cold. Mr. Gimson and Max Bickerton were sent for to lunch with Lt. Hara. There was a report in the *Hong Kong News* that a ship was leaving Kobe on the 4th with comforts for American prisoners of war and internees on board.

On the 3rd, people in camp were quite excited at the prospect or chance that we might be given a share of the American parcels as we had given the Americans still in camp a fair share of the Red Cross London and Canadian parcels we had received from Lourenço Marques and Goa. Mrs. Franklin kindly made me some coffee and raisin jam she had made from the raisins and sugar in her Canadian parcels. As the water was on I washed some handkerchiefs.

On the 4th it was pleasantly warm so I did not wear my sweater. In the afternoon I went to the hospital visiting Owen Hughes and Cornell. Afterwards I met Mrs. Smalley at her knitting and chatted with her until it was time to queue for hot water.

On Friday the 5th, I noted that the Japanese seemed to be taking a whole week to celebrate their New Year's holiday. The Fat Colonel came in and threw

a lunch party to which Mr. Gimson was invited. Later Mr. Gimson gave a lecture to the Engineers Association.

The 6th was similar but colder as the wind blew strongly from the east. There was an air raid alarm at 2.30 but no sign of raiders.

Sunday the 7th was also cold and windy. I visited the hospital and found Owen Hughes cheerful but otherwise much the same. An old man there greeted me. He looked 75 but told me he was getting on for 60. When I said I was some 5 years older he said I didn't look it, and seemed to him to be getting younger every day. Perhaps it was the better war news.

On the 8th the weather was much the same. Bellamy came in with the latest rumours of the relief supplies ship with American parcels which some of the rumours linked with a chance for repatriation. The paper reported that Montgomery had been given an improved command in France and the breaking of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Japan.

The 9th was another cold sunless day. The paper acknowledged that the situation in the Philippines was "Grave". The American "task forces" seemed to be about to effect landings upon Luzon, on both sides of which they were reported to have appeared.

The 10th was colder and greyer than ever — in fact bitterly cold and not a day to venture out except for necessary excursions to fetch hot water and to the library to change a book.

The 11th was cold. Zindel's International Red Cross gave to each internee a free issue of  $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. of Wong Tong (a bar of locally made semi-refined cane sugar) and some soy (bean-curd sauce) as well as two ounces of white sugar. The newspaper acknowledged an American landing in the San Fernando sector of Luzon Island on the 9th as well as air raids on Japan and Formosa. It also stated that Lt. General Tanaka had been appointed Japanese Governor of Hong Kong in succession to General Isogai. A man named Page, formerly of the Dairy Farm, died on the 12th, which was also very cold. Roll-call was held out of doors. Major A. H. Martin sent me M.Y. 20 from the P.O.W. camp; he also sent money to Mrs. Ainslie, the proprietress of the boarding house at which he had lived in Kowloon, and to C. H. Fuller of the Chinese Maritime Customs, who was a member of Swatow Lodge.

Pennefather-Evans, the Commissioner of Police, came to seek Mr. Gimson's approval of a scheme to enable members of the Police Force to buy M.Y. 100 in exchange for sterling cheques against accruing pay and guaranteed by the government. Mr. Gimson did not approve and gave reasons.

Saturday the 13th was a perfect day for a change. The Rev. Watanabe,<sup>1</sup> a Japanese Christian minister, brought in 8 cheering Red Cross messages to internees in the camp. During the morning a fourteen-vessel convoy passed

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1. Watanabe Kiyoshi, the reverend who helped the POWs and internees.

close to Stanley from the south going east.<sup>2</sup> We were told that the ship bearing American comfort gifts had reached Shanghai and would be coming on to Hong Kong.

Sunday the 14th was windless but not quite so fine as the day before. W. J. Carrie came in for a chat and then I went down to the India Section and had a cup of tea and a cigarette with L. R. Andrewes, whose room I had not previously visited. The news from Burma and the Philippines looked good to us. The Chief Justice told Mr. Gimson that Sheldon had told him that his "case" had gone home and threatened post-war litigation.

On the 15th there was the heaviest raid so far over the Colony in relays of planes between 9 and 11 a.m. A hundred or so letters came in, many of them dated March or April 1944. Some were for North, Butters and Deakin. None were for me. I wrote my monthly letter to Win. Then there was another air raid. It looked to us as if these large-scale and continuous air raids might be a prelude to something definite in the way of a landing.

On the 16th there were heavier air raids in relays all day.<sup>3</sup> Daisy Turner in the morning and Booten in the afternoon had to shelter in our block as they could not get back to their own quarters in time and we had them in our room. Sandbach also came there both morning and afternoon. From the window I saw two planes crash. From one of them a parachute descended. There was smoke from several fires. The gaol was hit by bombs or shells and also was machine-gunned. One raider flew in from the east, machine-gunning along the side of our block in Married Quarters; one bullet fell at Mr. Gimson's feet and then landed in the passage, where it was picked up by Batty-Smith. The plane passed over Japanese Headquarters up the Hill and dropped a bomb which demolished half of Bungalow C, killing 14 internees and wounding others both there and in Married Quarters (Block 4). The 14 killed by the bomb included S. F. Balfour, Oscar Eager, Mr. and Mrs. Hyde Lay and Stopani Thompson (a nephew of Mrs. Maitland); Mr. Langston of the Cow & Gate Company was wounded. One of the 6 wounded was D. C. Blake, who was hit by a bullet in Block 4 where he was at the time, though he normally lived in Bungalow C.

On the 17th, the 14 who had been killed in Bungalow C were buried in one grave at 4 p.m. By Japanese order only relatives were allowed to attend. It was considered that any other arrangement would bring together too many internees who would be unable to find shelter in the cemetery if other raiders came. Although the camp figures were 14 killed and 6 wounded, the *Hong Kong News* gave 15 killed and 28 wounded. The others may have been gaol casualties. The paper also reported similar attacks by carrier-borne planes on Macao, Swatow and Canton.

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2. It was the Japanese Hi-87 convoy, which was trying to dodge the American 3rd Fleet.

3. At least 471 sorties from the US Third Fleet attacked Hong Kong on that day.

On the 18th, Mrs. Hardie was taken into town by the Fat Colonel and Hara without any notification, for many hours, to her husband or to Mr. Gimson, and she was forced to give a description of the raid on the wireless. The newspaper stated that the camp buildings were clearly marked with white crosses on the roofs, which was not a fact, though the position of the camp should have been known to the raiders. Two of the blocks had Red Crosses on the doors but these had been used as dressing stations during the blitz and were the old markings. During the day there were several alerts but no raid in the neighbourhood of Stanley. Such raids as there were were isolated and over the hills. King of the bank staff had a long interview with Mr. Gimson about the liquidation of the banks by the Japanese.

On the 19th, Mrs. Hardie was brought back to camp. She had not been ill-treated but she had been forced to describe as best she could the air raid on the camp; but neither Col. Tokugawa nor Lt. Hara would see Mr. Gimson when he went up to complain, so he had to deliver his protest to Watenabe. Mrs. E. W. L. Martin died in the hospital, also a marine engineer named Levitzky. I played a rubber of bridge with Mrs. W. N. A. Smalley, Linnaker and Williamson in Block A. I went there to make up the four as Mr. Gimson could not go. This Mrs. Smalley was not the wife of Dr. Smalley hitherto referred to as Mrs. Smalley — no connection in fact.

On the 20th I received Win's Red Cross message of the 3rd March, 1944, and a duplicate of it dated the 1st April, 1944, which acknowledged mine to her of April 1943 and to Ethel of September. We each had issued to us a small loaf of bread. The April letter from Win had a snapshot of Mary Margaret taken at Delhi when nearly three years old.

On the 21st I visited the hospital in the afternoon and saw Owen Hughes, Harston, Langston and Wallington, all of whom were doing well. With the other visitors I got caught there during a raid, but as the planes left the camp alone this time we soon got back to our quarters where I read the Air Raid Precautions Commissions Report.

The 22nd was Win's birthday. It was a glorious warm sunny day. I put on the brown suit I had got from Zindel with the tie and maroon pullover Win had sent me from Melbourne for Christmas, 1941, as it was an anniversary. I had worn these gifts each Christmas since then. I went for a walk to Bungalow C, or rather to what was left of it, and to the cemetery and then to the India Section of the camp, meeting Mrs. Dawson Grove, Mrs. Compton, Mrs. Turner and Beryl Skipwith and also Mrs. Franklin.

The 23rd was not quite so fine. In the afternoon I went for a walk round the hospital and cliff to the India Section, meeting Mrs. Franklin on the way. The camp was full of rumours and there was no paper as the day before had been a press holiday. Colonel Tokugawa came in and claimed Mr. Gimson's attention all the afternoon.

On the 24th the newspaper was suppressed by Lt. Hara. It had evidently contained something we were not meant to see — probably, as we hoped, more news of Allied successes. The weather was good, balmy out of the wind and bracing in it. We had to draw water from the pits we had dug as the pressure in the pipes would not take the water to the roof tanks. I visited Compton and met Ewan Davies for a chat on the way there.

On the 25th, we were given some of the papers that had been held back. These indicated that in town there had been five thousand casualties and five hundred houses destroyed in one of the raids on the Wanchai area of Hong Kong.<sup>4</sup> That was where the Japanese settled after the surrender.

On the 26th, a meeting of block chairmen was held in our room at 2 p.m. Pritchard said to Mr. Gimson that the colonial system of government was applicable only to natives and could not and did not apply to British residents. Of course, Mr. Gimson could not endorse this extra-territoriality minded layman's view of the Colony's constitution. Mr. Gimson told me this immediately after the meeting and he also told W. J. Carrie when he called at 2.30.

The 27th was a dull drizzly day. Cold water had to be fetched from the block pit in the centre of our quadrangle as the pressure again in the pipes was insufficient. Except for water chores I stayed in all day.

The 28th was the coldest day we had had so far. The wind, which had got up during the previous night, blew strongly from the east. W. J. Carrie came in for a chat and gave me three cigarettes he had rolled himself with Chinese tobacco. He told me that if a bed could be got in the hospital the next day, the Medical Board had decided to remove his bad toenail.

On the 29th, the Chief Justice came in the afternoon to tell Mr. Gimson that he had called on Andrewes to resign from the board dealing with the effects of deceased internees, and that he would like Denis Henry Blake appointed in Andrewes' place.

On the 30th, Dr. Balean, senior, died in hospital, aged 69, and was buried during the day. As the weather was perfect I took a lesson in Cantonese with Dr. Wells. I had given up these classes when I got keen on Spanish, but as E. M. Raymond was the only member of Dr. Wells' class that had turned up, I was asked to come too. I then visited the hospital and saw Owen Hughes, Carrie, Pennefather-Evans, Cyril Brown and Mycock. Andrewes brought in his letter resigning his position as Official Administrator.

On the 31st, Andrewes came to see me for a chat and told me that the Chief Justice, unlike myself, had not asked him for his version of the situation before calling on him by letter to resign. I advised Andrewes that he was well out of it and that nothing would be gained by "going for" the Chief Justice.

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4. The large-scale air raid against the naval dockyard by the 14th USAAF on 21 January 1945.

After the raid on the camp on the 16th and the reference in the paper to the camp buildings having been clearly marked with white crosses, Mr. Gimson had asked the Japanese to so mark the camp but by the end of the month nothing had been done. Lt. Hara said he could get neither paint nor cement. Working parties which had gone into town to load rice on the 28th, 29th and 30th reported that most of the damage seemed to have been done in Wanchai by the raid on the 21st, which did not affect the camp or the Stanley area, and this was in effect what was said by the *Hong Kong News* as well.

The Japanese had in January said that they would allow 8 telegrams home to be sent each month, and we had decided in Council to allot the January 8 to relatives of those killed in the raid. For February the Japanese said that the eight telegrams should not be allotted to relatives of the bereaved, as deaths were all notified to the Geneva Red Cross who automatically informed relatives at home. So it was decided to allot the February telegrams to five original and three additional members of the Executive or Legislative Councils who had had no special privileges so far, namely Gimson, Alabaster, North, Butters, Sloss, Davidson, Newbiggin and Roberts.

### *February 1945*

So on the 1st of February I despatched to Win a ten-word telegram. We also were given a two-ounce addition to the rice ration for each of the two daily meals and this proved most acceptable. I visited the hospital and found Owen Hughes not so well. Mycock and Eric Grant Smith looked weak but said they were all right. Pennefather-Evans seemed all right and W. J. Carrie was still waiting for the surgeons to operate on his toe.

On the 2nd, W. J. Carrie discharged himself from the hospital, being fed up with waiting for the firewood the surgeons wanted to sterilize their instruments. Firewood came in during the day so he expected to go back again.

The 3rd was a drizzly day and cold as well. Lt. Hara went through the "extra rations" lists and cut out all canteen workers from the "workers" double ration; so protests were expected. There had been no blackout for the recent raids but one was now re-imposed.

Sunday the 4th was bitterly cold. Crowded with every garment I could put on I still could not get warm. We were told we could have 54 cigarettes to last a month at 60 sen each. A stiff price to get some warmth. Owen Hughes was reported very ill and not expected to last through the night. His wife was with him and allowed to sleep at the hospital.

On the 5th we learnt that Owen Hughes had died in the night. He had asked for a Masonic service and his widow also wished for it, so I authorized one to be conducted in two parts as the weather was so cold, the first part at the Warders' Club and the second part at the cemetery. The service was

# Epilogue

On the journey to Australia poor old A. N. Macfadyen, the magistrate, died on board the *Oxfordshire* and was buried at sea. Most of the Stanley internees were, like myself, given — during Admiral Harcourt's short administration — long sea voyages, via Australia or New Zealand and thence to England via South Africa. Some went direct via Suez. Among them was Sir Atholl MacGregor, the Chief Justice, who died near the canal and was also buried at sea. After my discharge from hospital in Sydney I returned to England via South Africa, where I was joined at Durban by my sister-in-law's sister, Daisy Hallely (see diary entry for 24th February, 1943) and met at Cape Town by Sir Frederick Maze and Judge Hayden and his wife — all well known in Hong Kong. Arrived early in 1946 in England, I rejoined my wife (Win), daughter (Rosalie), granddaughter (Mary Margaret), sisters (Dorothea and Evelyn) as well as my many nephews, nieces, cousins and in-laws. As soon as I was passed fit enough to go East again, I returned to Hong Kong by the S.S. *Otranto*, along with many other returning internees, and stayed a few months — long enough to see the Colony resume, with Sir Mark Young as Governor, its successful way of life, and to meet and greet again so many of all races and creeds who had shared, both within and without the perimeter of Stanley Camp, the privations of the period of enemy occupation. As Chairman of the Monuments and War Memorials Committee, I was privileged to recommend the return from Japan of the statue of Queen Victoria to the capital of Hong Kong, which had been named after her, the reinstatement of the bronze lions on their granite stands outside the Hong Kong Bank and the demolition of the hideous War Memorial the Japanese had erected on Mount Cameron. All this has been done. I also had the satisfaction of installing Charles Bernard Brown, my successor as District Grand Master and Grand Superintendent of English Freemasonry in Hong Kong and South China.

On my way home in the autumn of 1946, I enjoyed for some weeks the hospitality and kindness of Sir Franklin and Lady Gimson at Government House Singapore.

# Editors

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